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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - UN - KOFI ANNAN AND FOOD FOR  
OIL CONTROVERSY  
PARIS - WEDNESDAY, MARCH 30, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

UN - KOFI ANNAN AND FOOD FOR OIL CONTROVERSY

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

DOMESTIC POLITICS DOMINATE TODAY'S FRONT PAGES, WITH SEVERAL  
REPORTS, POLLS AND OPINION COLUMNS STILL BEING DEVOTED TO THE  
EUROPEAN CONSTITUTION AND THE TREND IN FRANCE IN SUPPORT OF  
THE "NO." THE MOST PROMINENT INTERNATIONAL STORY REVOLVES  
AROUND KOFI ANNAN, HIS SON'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE 'OIL FOR FOOD'  
CONTROVERSY AND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE U.S. AND THE UN.  
FOR LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION AND RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO,  
ANNAN IS "WEAKENED" BY THE SCANDAL INVOLVING HIS SON, BUT, AS  
LIBERATION PUT IT: "PRESIDENT BUSH IS NOT ABOUT TO THROW OIL  
ON THIS PARTICULAR FIRE. THE UN REFORMS ANNAN HAS PROPOSED ARE  
BEGINNING TO ELICIT SOME INTEREST IN WASHINGTON." (SEE PART C)  
IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO, GEORGE MALBRUNOT TITLES HIS  
REPORT ON THE HISTORY OF THE 'OIL FOR FOOD' PROGRAM: "IRAQ,  
THE WORLD'S GUILTY CONSCIENCE." "IN IRAQ, THE INTERNATIONAL  
COMMUNITY ERECTED A UNIQUE HUMANITARIAN PROGRAM IN THE HISTORY  
OF THE UN. INDEED, THE COUNTRIES RECEIVING AID WERE ALSO THOSE  
FINANCING THE AID PROGRAM. WITH COLOSSAL AMOUNTS INVOLVED. AND  
IRAQ, DEPRIVED OF ITS RIGHT TO VOTE AT THE UN, WAS ONE OF THE  
MAIN CONTRIBUTORS TO THE UN."

LIBERATION CONTINUES WITH ITS SECOND INSTALLMENT OF JOE  
SACCO'S COMIC STRIP RENDITION OF THE WAR IN IRAQ. IN THE  
SECOND PART OF HIS INTERVIEW, SACCO SAYS: "FROM WHAT I HAVE  
SEEN, I WOULDN'T SAY THE AMERICANS ARE WINNING. WHEN, AFTER  
TWO YEARS, YOU ARE STILL SCARED OF GOING INTO A TOWN WITHOUT  
AIRCRAFT PROTECTION, IT IS NOT VERY PROMISING. I HAVE SEEN  
IRAQI TROOPS BEING TRAINED, AND THEY DO NOT LOOK LIKE A VERY  
HIGH QUALITY ARMY. MY FEELING IS THE AMERICANS ARE MIRED IN  
IRAQ."

THE ABDUCTION OF THREE ROMANIAN JOURNALISTS IN IRAQ IS  
REPORTED, AS WELL AS THE FRENCH PRIME MINISTER'S REMARKS AT  
THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY YESTERDAY ABOUT THE FRENCH JOURNALIST  
STILL IN CAPTIVITY: "THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT HAS REASSURING  
INFORMATION WHICH GIVES US A MEASURE OF HOPE."

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

UN - KOFI ANNAN AND FOOD FOR OIL CONTROVERSY

"SUSPICION"

PATRICK SABATIER IN LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION (03/30): "TWO  
THINGS ARE CERTAIN. THE FIRST IS THAT THE UN WILL SURVIVE IN  
SPITE OF THE CORRUPTION AND FRAUD NOTED IN THE REPORT. THEY  
ARE NOT THE FIRST AND WILL NOT BE THE LAST. IN SPITE OF  
REPEATED CRITICISM OF THE UN IN THE U.S., THE UN IS MUCH TOO  
USEFUL, INCLUDING IN WASHINGTON, FOR THE WORLD'S MAJOR NATIONS  
TO LET IT DISAPPEAR LIKE ITS PREDECESSOR, THE SOCIETY OF  
NATIONS. THE SECOND IS THAT KOFI ANNAN, WHILE HE WILL NOT BE  
FORCED TO RESIGN, IS NEVERTHELESS WEAKENED THROUGH HIS SON'S  
DOINGS. THROUGH LACK OF DISCIPLINE, ANNAN IS NOW EXPOSED TO  
SUSPICIONS OF NEPOTISM AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST. ALTHOUGH A  
MAJORITY OF THE MEMBERS, INCLUDING FRANCE, HAVE GIVEN ANNAN  
THEIR SUPPORT, THE UN SECRETARY GENERAL WILL BE HARD-PRESSED  
TO OPPOSE U.S. PRESSURE TO BEND THE UN TO AMERICA'S  
INTERESTS."

"BUSH OPTS FOR CAUTION"

PASCAL RICHE IN LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION (03/30): "THE UN IS  
HARDLY POPULAR IN THE AMERICAN RIGHT. BUT PRESIDENT BUSH HAS  
REITERATED THAT HE WANTS A STRONG UN. RELATIONS BETWEEN THE UN  
AND WASHINGTON HAVE IMPROVED, AFTER THEIR COMMON EFFORTS IN  
SUPPORT OF THE TSUNAMI VICTIMS AND THE SUCCESSFUL AFGHAN  
ELECTIONS. BUT WITH THE NOMINATION OF JOHN BOLTON AS U.S.  
AMBASSADOR TO THE UN, PRESIDENT BUSH IS ALSO SAYING HE SHARES  
SOME OF THE FEELINGS HIS FELLOW AMERICANS HAVE FOR THE UN.  
BOLTON HAS NEVER HIDDEN HIS CONTEMPT FOR THE UN. STILL, FOR  
THE TIME BEING, THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION IS GIVING SUPPORT TO  
THE UN AND ITS SECRETARY GENERAL. ONE OF THE REASONS FOR THIS  
IS PROBABLY THAT THE REFORMS PROPOSED BY KOFI ANNAN HAVE

FINALLY TRIGGERED A MEASURE OF INTEREST IN THE U.S. ALSO, IF ANNAN WERE TO RESIGN, WASHINGTON WOULD HAVE TO DEAL WITH SOMEONE LESS EASY TO MANEUVER. FOR THE AMERICANS, KOFI ANNAN IS NOT THE WORST CHOICE, AND HIS DESIRE FOR REFORM IS GENUINE." LEACH